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STATINTL

Command Decision

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By JOHN FLEESON

Washington.

The neutron bomb is in the public domain at last.

Detailed descriptions of this new type of nuclear weapon are being published. Sen. Dodd (D-Conn.) has constituted himself the spokesman for those who believe that the secrecy regarding it is not now, if it ever was, in the public interest.

The basic reason why the lid is off and cannot be put back on is the failure of the nuclear test ban negotiations at Geneva. The Russians not only refused to negotiate seriously; their arrogant, even patronizing, attitudes convinced the American participants that Russia was already doing what Western scientists had warned was in the realm of the possible.

Congressional observers from the Atomic Energy Committee attended some of the Geneva sessions at the request of President Kennedy, to judge for themselves the value of the reports he was getting. All of them—Democrats and Republicans alike—have been far more reserved in their public comments than Dodd, but they have clearly come down on the side of a renewal of testing.

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President Kennedy obviously has to make the final decision. Only he has access to all the information, and knows the background of all the problems relating to this latest escapee from Pandora's Box.

Almost as important as the decision will be his manner of arriving at it. For him it is a major problem of communication, first with the parties immediately at interest, as the technicians, the military and political experts, his diplomatic advisers, whose judgment has been tempered by long experience in decision-making of such magnitude. Then he must handle public opinion, which is never satisfied with anything to which the flavor of kitchen cabinet attaches.

Cuba was a disaster for him not just because it failed; had it succeeded its value was dubious. The charge that clings is that he did not protect the Presidency from the consequences of failure. CIA Director Dulles and his deputy, Gen. Cabell, are expendable even though they have not yet been expended, but the Presidency is not.

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Mr. Kennedy did not improve on this situation with his own impromptu direction of the prisoners-for-tractors exchange. Now that has fallen flat and it was all too plain early in the game that both Kennedy and Castro have been working toward that end with such taking pains to fix it so that each could blame the other.

This is too gamy a business for the Presidency and one much more suited to the back room at city hall. Because of the nature of the Cuban situation, not much can be made of it politically by Republicans, but the damage to the leadership principle remains.

The irony is that Kennedy advisers write books about just such matters, most of them with great academic brilliance. Apparently the light that beats about the throne dazzles them fully as much as it did some well-known White House cronies of the not so distant past.

The President does not need to delegate authority but to exercise it. He does not need to narrow his circle but to expand it.

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